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Hearing Begins In Senate on U.S. 'Snooping'

A Senate subcommittee opened hearings today into what could be a stormy inquiry into government "snooping."

It involves the use of electronic devices and other gadgets including two-way mirrors.

In opening the hearings, Sen. Edward V. Long, D-Mo., the subcommittee chairman, said non-security federal agencies have purchased "a considerable quantity" of such equipment.

"We want to know if it is used, and, if so, for what purposes, and if it is not used, why not? We want to know who uses it, and under what controls."

Long said there was no intention for the subcommittee on administrative practices and procedures to inquire into government functions of "a highly sensitive nature."

Information Refused

The Missouri senator said the subcommittee has been laboring under "handicaps" and that two departments have refused it specific information.

He did not name the departments but added that the subcommittee in the next two weeks would look into "certain specific invasions of privacy which have been widely employed" by the Post Office Department.

"We are investigating an area about which few people wish to talk," Long said. "We have attempted to remedy this situation by the use of persistence and patience. . . ."

"We think that we have gotten something less than complete candor from some of the people to whom we have talked. We hope to remedy this by having all our witnesses sworn before testifying."

Incomplete Answers

Long said questionnaires had been sent to all government agencies and not all had replied. Some of the answers, he added, appeared incomplete.

Long said some of the government's surveillance techniques, taken individually, might appear innocent enough. "But," he added, "the finished picture may be 'Big Brother.'"

Long said the subcommittee's inquiry so far has looked into "less than 5 percent of government invasions of privacy."

The inquiry, it was said, will involve gadgets for wire tapping, subminiature transmitters and receiver, mirrors, microphones and laser beams.